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ABSTRACT

The procedures by which students at John Wood Community College (JWCC) can demonstrate communication abilities and receive credit for Introduction to Speech are detailed. The student desiring credit for the course, initiates the procedure by discussing it with a JWCC staff member who may refer the student to the Dean of Academic Affairs or the speech instructor if convinced that the student has a good chance of passing the exam. The speech instructor provides the student with a list of seven steps to follow to pass the proficiency exam which include: completing the 34-item McCroskey Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension and the revised 30-item Knower Speech Experience Inventory which assess public speaking anxiety and extent of experience; attending an advisement interview with the instructor to discuss the test results and determine whether the proficiency exam is in the student's best interest; obtaining a list of criteria for an effective informative speech; taking the exam which includes preparing a 5-6 minute speech selected by the instructor from provided materials and delivering the speech to a three-member panel; receiving a written evaluation; completing the necessary registration forms; and paying a required fee. Students receive credit for grades of C or better. The list of proficiency exam criteria according to speech content, organization, and delivery is appended. (TR)

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PROCEDURES FOR NONTRADITIONAL CREDIT BY PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION IN THE BASIC SPEECH COURSE AT JOHN WOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE QUINCY, ILLINOIS

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by
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JC 780 425

Rationale

The course CMN 101, Introduction to Speech, is a requirement for students pursuing degree programs through John Wood Community College. The rationale behind the requirement seems justified: Spoken communication is one of the most fundamental of human activities, and the liberally educated and/or occupationally prepared student should be able to demonstrate oral communication competency, particularly through public speech. To support the rationale for the requirement, however, is not to suggest that the only avenue by which one can become an effective public communicator is through a college-level speech class.

There are certain individuals whose broad range of life experiences would seem to indicate speech communication competency. For example, an individual who has completed the popular and highly successful Dale Carnegie course would probably gain little by taking Introduction to Speech. Other individuals, perhaps through their pursuits in occupations that involve selling and the practice of effective salesmanship, may have the skills necessary to demonstrate competency in oral communication without taking the college course. It is naive to assume, in other words, that only the individual who has completed a traditional college speech class can acquire public communication proficiency; such an assumption is simply not supported by empirical data.

Within the discipline of speech communication, unlike such disciplines as the social, math, natural, and occupational sciences, there are simply no existing paper and pencil examinations that are valid, reliable tests of public speaking ability.[1] Nevertheless,

many college speech departments offer a credit by exam option for the introductory course.[2] Generally, the procedures involve a judgment on the part of speech educators (a professional judgment based on objective criteria) as to whether or not the student should be exempt from the course and receive credit.

The Proficiency Examination

The typical speech proficiency examination at a two or four-year college is a skills test; the student actually prepares a short speech and delivers the talk before a panel of evaluators. For example, when a student indicates a desire to attempt the proficiency examination, he/she is given a list of criteria for an effective speech and is told that his/her speech should conform to the prescribed standards. After the student has had an opportunity to study the criteria thoroughly, he/she prepares within a two-hour period a 5-6 minute speech on the basis of information and subject materials provided by the instructor. The student then delivers the speech before a panel of evaluators. Following the speech, the panel makes a decision (on the basis of the speech criteria) as to whether the student demonstrated sufficient proficiency or skills to be awarded credit for the basic speech course.

Administrative Procedures

The administrative procedures detailed below will be employed at JWCC in order to provide proficiency credit in CMN 101:

1. The student initiates the procedure by bringing the matter to the attention of a counselor-advisor or other JWCC staff person. If the counselor-advisor has reasonable grounds to believe that

the student has life experiences in the form of speech communication-related training and practice to be tested for credit in CMN 101, then the student should be directed to the Dean of Academic Affairs or the speech instructor.

2. The speech instructor provides the student with the list of steps to follow in order to pass the proficiency examination and receive credit for CMN 101 (see Appendix A).

3. Preliminary screening of the student is conducted by the speech instructor. The screening procedure is not designed to prohibit any student from attempting credit by exam. Instead, the screening reveals what the student's chances of successfully completing the examination are. As an example, if a student has completed the two predictor instruments (PRPSA and SPEXP) and the scores reveal the presence of high anxiety and limited speech experience, the student can be advised by the instructor; such a student would be informed that while he/she can nevertheless attempt the exam, such a course of action would probably not be in the student's best interest. The screening consists of three steps:

   a. The student completes the 34-item McCroskey Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension (PRPSA), a test that measures public speaking anxiety and probable stagefright.[3] The instrument is scored, and the results are communicated to the student in order to give proper advice regarding pursuit of the credit by proficiency exam. The correlation between the score on the instrument and public speaking ability, it should be noted, is quite high; the measure is a valid predictor, although not a credit by exam test in and of itself.[4]

b. The student completes the revised 30-item Knower Speech Experience Inventory (SPEXP), an instrument that measures the extent of public communication experience.[5] Like the PRPSA, the revised SPEXP test is a valid correlate of public speaking ability, although it is not a public speaking exam in and of itself.[6]

c. The student is interviewed by the instructor. At this time the student is informed that while he/she may nevertheless take the proficiency examination, the results of the predictor instruments suggest or do not suggest a likelihood of successful completion of the exam.

4. The student is given a list of criteria for an effectively prepared and delivered informative speech of 5-6 minutes in length (see Appendix B).

5. After several days of studying the criteria, the student takes the proficiency examination. He/she is given a set of materials for preparing the speech (24 pieces of information about a topic selected by the instructor, paper, pencils, and note cards). The student then has two hours to prepare and rehearse the 5-6 minute speech.

6. At the end of the two hours, the student delivers the speech before a three-member panel consisting of the speech instructor and two staff members to be named by the Dean of Academic Affairs. The panel members attempt to decide jointly the grade to be awarded and make written critique comments to be returned later to the student. Final determination of whether the student successfully completed the speech examination is the responsibility of the speech instructor. The minimum proficiency that will be accepted for credit is a grade of C (average).

7. The student is notified of his/her grade and is provided with written criticisms of the speech examination. Should the student receive a failing grade, no further procedures will be initiated.
8. The student completes the necessary registration forms and obtains the signature of the Dean of Academic Affairs for approval of the credit by examination.
9. The student pays $15.00 for successful completion of the proficiency examination to the Business Office. No apportionment claims may be submitted to the Illinois Community College Board.
10. The grade is recorded on the Student's transcript.

Conclusion

Two questions that frequently arise in connection with credit by exam for introductory speech classes are: (1) Approximately how many students will attempt credit by exam per semester? and (2) Will students abuse the policy in an attempt merely to avoid taking CMN 101? At most institutions where a credit by exam procedure for basic speech is in effect, no more than two or three students per semester usually attempt an examination. The screening procedure, designed to assess the extent of the student's previous speech communication training and practice, ordinarily reveals quite accurately the student's chances of passing the exam, and most individuals will not attempt the actual exam if they are informed of training/experience deficiencies. With regard to the second question, one intention of the screening procedure is to evaluate carefully each applicant's speech experience. Moreover, it will be

the nature of the student's speech training and experience, and not his/her desire to take the test, that will ultimately determine whether he/she will pass the credit exam. Thus, the opportunity for the student to "take the easy way out" of CMN 101 is minimized. In conclusion, the proficiency examination is designed as a nontraditional yet legitimate credit option to be used by those students who already possess the public speaking skills that are taught in Introduction to Speech.

APPENDIX A: STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF CREDIT BY PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION IN CMN 101, INTRODUCTION TO SPEECH

A student who seeks to complete CMN 101 by proficiency examination should:

Step 1: Make arrangememts to complete the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety and the Speech Experience Inventory in order that the instructor can assess generally the student's range of speech communication experience.

Step 2: Receive advisement from the instructor after completion of the screening instruments described in Step 1. The advisement is designed to assist the student in determining whether taking the proficiency examination would be in his/her best interest.

Step 3: Obtain from the instructor a list of criteria for an effective informative speech.

Step 4: Complete the proficiency examination by:

(a) Preparing a 5-6 minute informative speech during a two-hour period selected by the instructor. All necessary materials to be used in preparation, such as the topic, information to be consulted, note cards, and pencils, will be provided by the instructor.

(b) Delivering a 5-6 minute informative speech before a three-member panel selected by the instructor and Dean of Academic Affairs. Panel members will evaluate the speech on the basis of the speech criteria provided earlier to the student.

Step 5: Receive a written evaluation--critique of the speech with an indication of whether the proficiency examination has been successfully completed. If the student is successful, the grade he/she will receive will also be provided.

Step 6: Complete the necessary registration forms and obtain the signature of the Dean of Academic Affairs in order that the grade can be properly recorded on the student's transcript.

Step 7: Make arrangements to pay $15.00 for the cost of the proficiency examination to the JWCC Business Office.

APPENDIX B: CMN 101

PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION CRITERIA

In order to receive a grade of A, B, or C, a student should be able to prepare and deliver a 5-6 minute informative speech that conforms to most or all of the following criteria:

1. CONTENT
   - 1.1 Sufficient limiting-narrowing of topic provided by the examiner
   - 1.2 Purpose clearly communicated to audience
   - 1.3 Subject appropriate, relevant, and made interesting to panel
   - 1.4 Points made clearly to panel
   - 1.5 Includes personal or human interest stories--examples
   - 1.6 Presents own original ideas, structure, or interpretation
   - 1.7 Emphasizes organization enough to help audience remember points
   - 1.8 Includes variety of data--statistics, quotations, examples, etc.
   - 1.9 Includes examples to clarify, add interest
   - 1.10 Moves from point to point with smooth transitions
2. ORGANIZATION
   - 2.1 Begins with an effective attention-getter, introduction
   - 2.2 Previews subject or viewpoint specifically and clearly
   - 2.3 Presents 2-5 specific points
   - 2.4 Supports each point
   - 2.5 Reviews or summarizes major points
   - 2.6 Concludes with memorable statement

3. DELIVERY

3.1 Steps up to speak with confidence

3.2 Gets set before speaking

3.3 Establishes eye contact before speaking

3.4 Begins without referring to notes

3.5 Maintains eye contact with audience at least 75% of time

3.6 Sounds extemporaneous, not read or memorized

3.7 Uses only one note card for notes

3.8 Refers to notes only occasionally

3.9 Avoids "ah," "so," "you know," "well," etc.

3.10 Stops at end of idea; doesn't hook sentences together with "and," "and-uh," etc.

3.11 Maintains good posture; avoids nonpurposeful movement

3.12 Dresses to help, not hinder the speech

3.13 Speaks loudly enough to be heard easily

3.14 Gestures effectively

3.15 Uses facial expression to add interest

3.16 Moves about purposefully

3.17 Doesn't pace

3.18 Appears to enjoy speaking

3.19 Seems to care that the audience listens

3.20 Speaks with enthusiasm

3.21 Appears confident and relaxed

3.22 Varies speaking rate--not too fast nor too slow; changes rate

3.23 Varies voice pitch and volume

3.24 Enunciates clearly

3.25 Pronounces correctly

3.26 Upon finishing, moves out with confidence

3.27 Uses correct grammar

3.28 Uses vivid, appropriate, language for clarity

3.29 Uses language appropriate for the speech situation rather than language suitable for an essay

This list is adapted from Leon Fletcher, How To Design And Deliver A Speech (New York: Chandler, 1973).

In order to determine what grade the student receives, the three-member panel will employ the following grading standards:

I. Normally, an "average speech" (C) should meet the following standards:

A. Conform to type assigned (informative).

B. Conform reasonably to the time limit.

C. Exhibit sound organization: a clear purpose adequately supported by main ideas that are easily identified.

D. Be intellectually sound in developing the topic with adequate and dependable evidence.

E. Exhibit reasonable directness and communicativeness in delivery.

F. Be correct grammatically and in pronunciation and articulation.

II. The "better than average" (B) speech should meet the foregoing tests and also:

A. Contain elements of vividness and special interest in its style.

B. Be of more than average stimulative quality in challenging the audience to think or in arousing depth of response.

C. Establish rapport of a high order through style and delivery which achieve a genuinely communicative circular response.

III. The "superior speech" (A) not only meets the foregoing standards but also:

A. Constitutes a genuinely individual contribution by the speaker to the thinking of the audience.

B. Illustrates skillful mastery of internal transitions and of emphasis in presentation of the speaker's ideas.

IV. Speeches which must be classified "below average" (D or F) are deficient in some or several of the factors required for the "C" speech.

This list is adapted from Robert T. Oliver, "The Eternal (and Infernal) Problem of Grades," The Speech Teacher 9 (January 1960): 8-11.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Wayne N. Thompson, ed., Quantitative Research in Public Address and Communication (New York: Random House, 1967): p. 187.

[2]See Paul W. Keller, William Seifrit, and John Baldwin, "A Survey of the Use of Proficiency Examinations in Speech in Fifty Colleges and Universities," The Speech Teacher 8 (September 1959): 242-245; Norman T. London, "Professional Attitudes Toward a First Course in Speech and Its Requirement," The Speech Teacher 13 (January 1964): 25-31; James W. Gibson et. al., "The First Course in Speech: A Survey of U.S. Colleges and Universities," The Speech Teacher 19 (January 1970): 13-20; Dean S. Ellis, "A University Speech Placement Test for Entering Freshmen," The Speech Teacher 15 (March 1966): 158-164; and Barbara Lieb Brilhart, "Communication Education: Some Possible Futures," paper presented at annual meeting of the Western Speech Communication Association, Seattle, Washington, November, 1975.

[3]James C. McCroskey, "Measures of Communication-Bound Anxiety," Speech Monographs 37 (1970): 269-277.

[4]Daniel T. Hayes and Barry F. Morganstern, "Predicting Success in the Basic Course," paper submitted to Southern Speech Communication Journal, January, 1978, publication pending.

[5]Franklin Knower, "A Study of Speech Attitudes and Adjustments," Speech Monographs 5 (1938): 130-203.

[6]Daniel T. Hayes, "Toward Validation of a Measure of Speech Experience for Prediction in the Basic College-Level Speech Communication Course," Central States Speech Journal 28 (Spring 1978): page numbers not yet announced.

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